

APRIL 1997

HERMES

WESLEYAN'S MAGAZINE OF POLITICAL, CRITICAL, AND CREATIVE THOUGHT



HOMIES NOT JAIL



CAMPUS DIARY

Cliche time: I never thought it would happen to me, especially not here. But it did. And it's time I admit to myself that it's probably not the first time.

Last night I was chalking for BGLAD. I had been looking forward to it all day. I had chalked for the first time for National Coming Out Day this past October and found it to be the most affirming experience. I was with people I felt comfortable around: my boyfriend at the time, people I knew from Queer Alliance and BiLeGa. I felt unashamed, proud, powerful.

Last night, however, wasn't the same experience. The day before, someone had written "We're sick and tired of fags spreading AIDS" near the Campus Center. Though homophobic graffiti has been a regular occurrence on this campus this semester, this one really hit me. I could easily dismiss the other incidents as the work of isolated morons. But the writer(s) of this one had levelled an accusation against me against me and every other queer person I know, an accusation based on a stereotype that to this day retains some legitimacy in certain parts of the scientific establishment (like the FDA).

I thought chalking would lift my spirits, help me relive National Coming Out Day. I wrote particu-

larly racy things: "Fuck Your Gender," "Sodomy is a Civil Right," "Our Right to Love, Our Right to Fuck." While I was writing in front of the '92 Theatre, I saw two fratboys in the back reading the last of those chalkings. They went ballistic. I chuckled to myself until I saw and heard one of them yelling "Faggot!" — possibly to his friend, but possibly to another chalker. They then proceeded down towards High Street. When they saw me and two of my friends chalking, they angrily yelled at us "Don't write shit..." and something else I didn't make out.

I froze. I wanted to say something, to tell them to fuck off. But I was intimidated, afraid of a physical confrontation. I was relieved when they kept walking.

I loathe the idea of being a victim. I hate confronting my fears. I like the fact that I am not particularly effeminate, that I can outlift the average guy I see at Freeman, that I can pass for straight. Who's gonna dare fuck with me? Well, someone did.

Earlier this semester when I was petitioning for the university to recruit a queer studies professor at the Campus Center, I got pinned between a table and a glass door for a good five seconds by some jock who

had just a second before ignored me when I asked him to sign. Today I'm admitting to myself that he knew what he was doing. Today I'm admitting to myself that homophobes at Wesleyan don't have anymore respect for me than they do for the most stereotypically gay men I know.

Today I'm admitting to myself that I can't take them on alone. Queer Alliance can't take them on alone. We need the help of everyone on this campus. People — students, administrators, faculty — need to speak up when they hear about homophobia. They need to tell other people that they don't think homophobia is cool, and that it's totally unacceptable when it's expressed in a manner that is intimidating to queer students.

There are students on this campus who merely want to engage in consensual romantic and sexual relationships with members of the same sex. And there are students who will go out of their way to intimidate them. At most, one of those groups can feel comfortable at Wesleyan.

Whose side are you on?



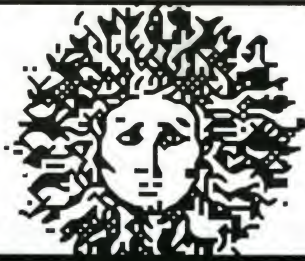
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HERMES

The Staff of Life

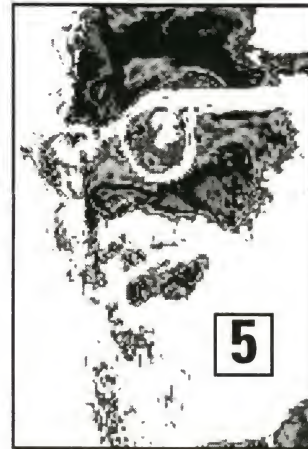
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Would you buy a used car from this man?

Cover design by Sarah Wilkes



Letters to Hermes



Dear Hermes,

livia gershon's "Klekolo Coffee World: A Sampler" (March 1997) was interesting in a kind of, like, you know, rilly condescending way. though it's about time Wesleyan gave some credit to court street's Den of Sociology, especially since so many of you spend so much time there, i did not appreciate ms. gershon's superior undertone. it is clear that her intentions were the opposite in this middle-town exposé of sorts, but it sounded an awful lot like she was saying, "hey, guys, look! these people aren't rich or formally educated, but like, they're just like us, almost!" oh, how liberal; what controversial

material this is!

it's sickening to consider the possibility that members of the wesleyan community think that having a well-to-do Mommy and Daddy who will pay for a college as outrageously expensive as wesleyan is, and subsequently procuring a degree from a university such as wesleyan is a prerequisite for being you know, like SMART and socially conscious. along this vein, ms. gershon could have done a much better job in presenting a diverse cross-section of klekolo clientele. because there are actually middletown residents who, oh, have careers, college degrees, interesting personalities, and social consciences.

there are even people who go to klekolo to buy coffee.

in any case, this letter is not to imply that i don't read and enjoy hermes. i especially enjoyed john kamp's post-1990 debbie gibson in the march issue, and i just can't get over that whole hermes slaying argus thing, that's so cool. i suggest that in the future you continue to distribute copies of hermes at klekolo, because, you know, like maybe some of the kids who hang out there will learn to read and pick up a copy.

xxxxxxxxxxxx

medusa

A correction: In my March article on media abuses I unfortunately committed one myself. In the section on anti-rape activist Karen Palmer, my wording made it sound as if NBC had created the composite sketch of her rapist which the Santa Monica Police used to wrongfully arrest young black men. In reality, the composite sketch was drawn and abused by Santa Monica Police just after Ms. Palmer's rape occurred. NBC then used the sketch for their December 4 broadcast, making no mention of the police abuses or the viability of the sketch despite repeated protest from Mrs. Palmer.

Also, just as an update on my piece, the FCC has just turned over new broadcasting space (estimated value

ranging from \$40 to 70 billion) to established TV networks almost for free. Television bandwidth, legally the sole property of the public, will thus remain instead solely in the hands of the large networks without even the possibility of it being publicly auctioned or forming special channels reserved for non-commercial organizations. The new bandwidth is being made available to prepare for the onset of digital TV (which is set to completely phase out analog TV by 2006). Upside: wider and higher definition TV. Downside: \$2000 new TV sets (or a \$150 to \$300 converter) and, as usual, no public control over any television content.

—Drew Tipson



The Poet and Me

a reader mourns the death of Allen Ginsberg

by Sarah Wilkes

Hebrew/Aramaic prayer of mourning.
Yitgadal v'yitkadash sh'meh raba...

What happens when a poet dies? Obituaries and tributes all say, "his works live on," or some cliché like that, but what happens to that mind that created all those works? Where does it really go? As a long-time appreciator of Allen Ginsberg, I never imagined him ever dying, but evidently he did, on April 5, 1997.

The first book of poetry I ever read by Ginsberg was *Reality Sandwiches* (City Lights Books 1963). I can't remember when I got it, but it's not very old; I'm not that old a reader to begin with. In it is my favorite acknowledgment by a writer of his craft:

"Blessed be the Muses for their descent, dancing round my desk, crowning my balding head with Laurel."
This untitled piece, cut into four lines and wedged in



Allen Ginsberg in the 1950s

the book between two frantic poems recalling William Burroughs' slain wife, lays out a perfect, simple prayer for all writers, artists, and other, uncategorizable creators everywhere to recite before and after creating—bald of head or not.

After learning of his death, and reading his obituary in *The Hartford Courant*, I felt compelled to run upstairs in Olin Library and find and recite the Kaddish. Not Ginsberg's "Kaddish," his 1960 eulogy to his mother Naomi, but the original Kaddish, the

The time I learned in Jewish Sunday School years ago runs through my head as I think of Ginsberg's own prayers. I'm reading the Kaddish out of *The Second Jewish Catalog* (Sharon and Michael Strassfeld, editors; Jewish Publication Society of America, 1976), the same book which, on page 96, says that homosexuality is "a violation of the Torah's concept of sexual purpose and sexual functions, not unlike the modern biological notion that years of evolution have placed the sexual organs in a heterosexual position [???]—evidence, we are told, that wo/man is programed for procreation, not for homosexuality." What would Allen Ginsberg, who had been out of the closet for over 40 years, have said to this?!? Allen Ginsberg: a gay, Jewish, Buddhist, pacifist, activist, male Beat poet—a treasure chest of adjectives!! I've often thought of Ginsberg as one of modern Jewry's greatest living treasures; evidently the editors of the Jewish Catalogs disagree, as there is no mention of him in any of the three "definitive" catalogs on Jewish faith and culture, yet there is that article quoted above which denies, or at least diminishes, through (I believe) misplaced religious priorities, one of the many attributes of Ginsberg that color him.

Yitbarar v'yishtabach, v'yitpaar, v'yitroman, v'yithadar, v'yitaleh v'yithalal sh'meh dekudishah...

My favorite part of the Kaddish to recite; all those fricative "v'yits" heaping praises on the God whose glory shines beyond all prayers and hymns (and poems?... I dunno). There is not one mention of death in the mourner's Kaddish. Instead, we say: "May there be abundant peace from heaven, and a good life, for us and for all Israel; and say: Amen." Let's hope so. Meanwhile, I say: May there be abundant peace on the balding head of Allen Ginsberg, who had a good life, blessing us and all Israel (and all of Ginsberg's America, and the global nation of poetry) with his abundant, beautiful works and deeds. And blessed be the muses who crowned his head with laurel; and I say: Amen. There will be no other, who so moved the thinkers and do-ers as he did, leaving his many marks on American culture of the 20th century for all in the future to look back on and enjoy, admire, and become inspired by. Thank you, Allen Ginsberg.

Where is Allen Ginsberg's mind? On my shelf, where I've always seen it. I guess the cliché was right. *Y'sheh shalom binromayn, hu ya'aseh shalom aleinu v'al kol Yisrael, v'imru: Amen.*



Early One Morning

"They'll Tear Out Your Cardiovasculars!"

BY BRIAN EDWARDS-TIEKERT

It is cold.

It is cold at 7AM in Bridgeport and the wind is fierce across the parking lot where I am standing and hugging myself and waiting for the sun to get higher.

The buildings on the other side of the street are abandoned, boarded up, and crumbling— except for the large gray one directly across from me. It is ugly. It is made out of gray bricks, thousands of gray bricks, practically uninterrupted except for one lonely window. That window looks out

over two half-full parking lots, an elevated section of highway, and a crowd of twenty other people who are hugging themselves to keep warm.

Half of them are protesters, and they are there because the building with one window is a health clinic that performs abortions twice a week. They have pamphlets and flyers and photographs of botched and bloody abortions, they have bibles and little plastic fetuses, they have wooden signs and a metal stroller full of fake fetal body parts.

The other half are clinic escorts, volunteers, and they are there because of the protesters. They have fluorescent jerseys with 'Clinic Escort' written in English on one side and in Spanish on the other.

The clinic only performs abortions on Tuesday and Saturday mornings, and they have all their patients come in between 7 and 9 in the morning. Most of the women who come in look very, very scared. The protesters run up to their cars and follow them up to the front

there to comfort them, they aren't there to tell them everything will be all right. They're there to occupy a few crucial feet of personal space, space that could be filled by the protesters and their plastic fetuses and bloody photographs.

"When the cars pull up outside of the clinic, don't run up to them." That was the first cardinal rule of escorting we were taught during training: Don't Run. It doesn't matter if the protesters, the 'antis,' run up to the cars first, Don't Run. People get nervous when they see anyone running at them, it doesn't matter who. Running is what the antis do. Just walk as fast as you

can.

"When you're escorting someone, don't talk about the antis."

That was the second cardinal rule of escorting we were taught. Don't draw their attention to the

protesters: hearing about them is almost as bad as hearing from them. And the antis feed off of attention.

The third cardinal rule was this: "Don't talk to the antis."

Every Tuesday and Saturday morning the same protesters come out to defend the unborn, and every Tuesday and Saturday the same escorts turn out to defend the living. There's some variation in each group from morning to morning, the five students that drive down from Wesley, for example, but the majority of the people there are there every time.

If politics makes strange bedfellows, then routine makes even stranger ones. There's a bizarre familiarity between the people who are there all the time. Talk to one of the regular escorts, and she knows the name of every protester there. She also has her own nicknames for them. She knows what most of them do for a living, and she knows which of the assorted anti-abortion groups they're affiliated with.

Stanley, for instance, is pretty much a fixture at the clinic. Everyone knows his name. He's been protesting every day, in any weather, since Roe v. Wade. He's short, white haired, and his face, which could be called

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between offering financial aid for women to keep
their children and telling horror stories of abortions
gone wrong.**

door of the clinic, shouting, cajoling, threatening, praying, offering pamphlets: anything to keep them from going into that gray building. The escorts are there to walk between the women and the protesters. They aren't

handsome if it didn't spend so much time twisted in a grimace and howling at patients, is usually covered in a layer of white stubble. He's a 70 year old virgin who's still waiting for a 'pure' woman.

He parks his van across the street from the clinic every morning, and covers it with homemade wooden signs. They're written in adhesive block-letters: "JESUS DIED FOR YOU WILL YOU KILL HIS BABY?" "CANCER RISK UP 300% WITH 2-3 ABORTIONS," "THEY KILL BABIES HERE" (the 's' is glued on backwards), "GOD DOESN'T FORGET!" He must be something of a collector, because it's obvious that he has his favorites. The cancer one always gets propped against his front windshield. He keeps a sign with a large photograph of a dismembered fetus propped on his roof, facing the only window in the clinic. He carries around his favorite: a blow-up of an article on a woman who died during an abortion.

Even lugging around that heavy sign, he sprints across the street to confront the women getting out of their cars. "Your mother loved you, don't kill your baby." He chants it to patients, to himself, to the crowd of escorts and protesters in general. He rocks back on his heels and reels with the force of his conviction, and his enthusiasm compensates for his lack of eloquence.

"Are you going in there to kill your baby?" he'll demand nine or ten times without being answered. When he's out of sight of the camera, he'll lean into the patients and push escorts out of the way to deliver his message: "Sometimes when they do they abortions, they have to rip your organs out! They'll tear out your cardiovasculars!" To boyfriends and husbands: "Sir, if you let her go in there, you might not get her back alive!" To everyone: "Don't go in there, it's against the law!" To the clinic's lonely window: "Abortion is illegal!" He tries to follow a train of thought: "It's against the law because murder is against the law! ... and abortion is murder!" His voice gains volume, and he delivers the coup de grace: "It's in the Declaration of Independence!" He basks in the glow of his statement for a minute, then starts chanting again: "Your mother loved you, don't kill your baby!"

Silent Bob is Stanley's crony. He holds up Stanley's signs and shows them to people and grins, but he never says anything. They almost look like twins when they stand next to each other, short, white-haired, holding large wooden signs and grinning at their own righteousness.

Carmen is a 'life counselor.' She alternates

between offering financial aid if a woman wants to keep her child and telling horror stories of abortions gone wrong. She has a few photographs of ambulances being loaded in front of the clinic. She says four women were hospitalized because of botched abortions last summer. Before the escorts started using a camera, Carmen would walk backwards in front of the women headed for the clinic. She'd walk where the women had to look at her and listen to her, and she'd walk very slowly so they'd have to slow down too. That stopped when a judge told her it constituted blocking access to the clinic.

The Preacher never approaches people in their cars, but he's one of the most intimidating protesters at the clinic. He paces up and down the sidewalk in agitation, muttering under his breath, sometimes lurching aggressively toward escorts. He's tall, almost six and a half feet, and he has a mustache that would make him look a little bit like Hitler if it grew in thicker. He's a minister in real life, and leads prayer circles in front of the clinic.

Art harangues the women going in. He's a tall black man who follows patients from their cars up to the clinic door. He holds a plastic model of black fetus the size of his thumb, and tells women that that's what their baby looks like at three weeks. He tells blacks that they're committing black genocide. He even rebukes the escorts: "Isn't this nice, one woman helping another woman kill her child!"

From across the street, the protesters and the escorts merge into one mass of people going through a common ritual. The escorts talk about the weather. The protesters talk

about the weather. The protesters talk about God. The escorts talk about the protesters. One of the escorts videotapes every-

thing, to keep the protesters from getting violent. One of the protesters tapes everything, to keep up with the escorts. Some of the protesters split off into prayer circles, chanting the prayers they know by heart. Some of the escorts duck into the clinic, to warm up, where a pot of hot coffee is always waiting for them.

When a car with a woman in the passenger seat parks nearby, people split off from both groups to hunt it

He's a 70-year-old virgin who's still waiting for a 'pure' woman.

I want to ask these people why they feel so strongly about a little plastic model.

I want to ask them why, if they feel so strongly about preventing abortions, they don't do something that will really make a difference, why they don't hand out condoms to women who aren't pregnant yet instead of bloody photos to those who are.



down. The antis run. The escorts walk very fast. On the sidewalk, the protesters and escorts are interspersed in small clusters, politely ignoring each other for the most part, out of an almost professional courtesy.

I say 'for the most part,' because not everyone respects the peace. Sometimes the religious protesters try to convert the younger escorts. A woman stops praying and approaches me, clutching her fetus, "I just have one question for you, who's going to speak for the rights of the unborn?"

I don't answer.

"Can't you answer my question? Who's going to speak for the rights of the unborn?"

I cross to the other side of the street.

"Why can't anyone answer my question? Why can't anyone tell me who's going to speak for the rights of the unborn?" she repeats to the streetful of people.

It isn't just the protesters who cross the line: some of the older escorts talk back too. There are two men in particular who come sometimes and stand in front of the clinic, insulting Stanley. "Come on, Stanley.... you just want it up the ass, is all!" They seem less concerned with the women coming into the clinic than with starting a row with the protesters. The protesters feed off the attention, and the ensuing shouting match just makes the clinic look a little more imposing.

Of course, the protesters don't just try to convert us. I escort a teenage woman across the threshold of the clinic, and Art has gotten himself so worked up talking about black genocide, that he turns to me the moment the door closes:

"You think you're innocent, but you're not. None of you are innocent."

I'm walking away.

"Look at that face, like you don't know what's going on!"

He's following me.

"Why don't you send some real men down from Wesleyan, none of these wussy men! Huh? Why do you send down these wussy men, is that all you've got?"

I'm the only man escorting from Wesleyan, so he must be talking to me.

I'd like to answer him back. I'd like to tell him that we have over a hundred trained escorts at Wesleyan, and we can send more down if he likes. I'd like to ask him why he thinks we want to send men down to protect women's rights (we have a policy of not letting more than one male escort approach a car at a time).

He's clutching a tiny black fetus, the size of his thumb. He holds it up and asks me: "Where would you be if your mother had an abortion?"

The escorts talk about the weather. The protesters talk about the weather. The protesters talk about God. The escorts talk about the protesters.

A woman stops praying and approaches me, clutching her fetus, "I just have one question for you, who's going to speak for the rights of the unborn?"

I didn't answer.

She did.

My mother got pregnant as a teenager in a working-class section of Providence. She had an abortion because she didn't mean to get pregnant, because she didn't want to raise a child then, and she went on to get a college degree and a PhD in Political Science. She founded the Women's Studies department at SUNY Purchase, taught there for more than twenty years, and raised me.

When she died, they wanted to name a building after her. They founded a lecture series in her honor instead.

Now I'm enrolled at Wesleyan University, escorting abortion patients some mornings, because my mother did have an abortion, and

that's where it got me.

At one of the lectures in my mother's memory, a friend of her spoke about the issue before introducing the speaker: "Mary always said we had to confront the issue by being open about our own abortions. She had one. I have had two. Growing up as a confused gay

teenager, I had to go to Tijuana for two illegal abortions. I got an infection from the second one and almost died there."

But I can't tell this protester any of that, and by the time I finish thinking it, he's already walking up to the next car.

The women coming in are mostly young. Some of them don't look any older than 15. Many of them are black or Latino. None of them look happy.

One woman arrives from a local prison. She's escorted by two wardens, driven in a State Correctional Facilities van. The tall black protester points at her triumphantly, "Would you look at that, we're paying for this woman to murder her child! Our tax dollars are paying for this!" Stanley shouts at her, too. "You've had your sex." He spits out the last word, "Don't kill your baby!"

One woman is crying on her way into the clinic. One protester is holding pictures of bloody fetuses up in front of face, a second is telling her about some women they had to take out of the clinic in an ambulance, a third is offering her financial aid if she'll keep her child.

Some women come with girlfriends, others come with men. The men they come with can be almost as bad as the protesters. Some get into shouting matches with the antis, stopping the middle of the street to curse them out, stopping with a woman next to them who desperately needs to keep moving forward. One woman won't get out

of the car because she doesn't want to be on film. She points at the camera the escorts are using.

"Just shut up and get in there!" Her boyfriend grabs her by the arm and pulls her to her feet.

I shout at the cameraman to stop recording.

"But I don't want to be on film!"

"It doesn't fucking matter, I said move!"

"Walk fast," we tell them when they get out of their cars.

Walk fast, look ahead, try not to see the signs on Stanley's van, try to ignore the four people shouting at you and waving pictures in your face, walk fast and don't stop.

Therregular escorts just won a court case against Stanley for blocking access to the clinic. He used to push and shove the escorts to get near the women on their way in. He still does it when he's out of sight of the camera. But now there's an injunction against him... if a woman going into the clinic tells him she doesn't want to speak to him, he has to stay at least five feet away from her. Five feet might not seem like much, but it's better than twice as far as an escort can keep him away by standing between him and the patient.

So now there's one more thing we tell women on their way in: "Tell that man you don't want to talk to him and he has to stay away from you."

I tell that to a woman I'm walking across the parking lot. Stanley's maneuvered in front of the other escort and he's practically pressed up against the woman.

"Ma'am, are you going in there to kill your baby? Are you going in there to kill your baby? Ma'am don't go in there."

"Go away." She tells him, loud and firm.

"Ma'am don't go in there to kill your baby if you go in there they're gonna kill your baby and and sometimes they have to rip out your organs!"

"Go Away!" She faces him and shouts it. He doesn't. If anything, he's encouraged by the fact that she's saying anything to him, his voice gains strength and momentum.

"Sometime they go in there and they have to rip out your organs too and if you go in there you might not come back out. Don't kill God's baby!"

She stops.

She turns to him and shouts each word: "I SAID GO AWAY!"

He's stopped right next to her, about six inches away. The other escort, an older woman, catches up and starts haranguing him.

"Stanley, she told you to go away! You know what that means. You have to stay away from her now. Stanley!"

Confused, he looks at her and sputters. "But, but I'm just standing here."

"Why don't you send some real men down from Wesleyan, none of these wussy men! Huh? Why do you send down these wussy men, is that all you've got?"

All four of us are. Stanley and the escort start arguing while the woman looks back and forth. The argument grows more heated, and the woman is left in the wake, standing there when she should be moving toward the clinic.

"Walk fast" we tell them, but it doesn't do any good when we get too consumed with the protesters to walk them in ourselves. The woman has a sort of lost expression on her face until I suggest we keep going to the clinic.

It is cold.

It is cold in front of the clinic and the wind is blowing hard across the protesters and the escorts alike.

It blows some of the signs off of Stanley's van, and he rushes across the street to gather them up.

It blows over the baby stroller full of plastic dissected fetal parts, which roll and slide down the street. Three or four protesters run after them. Almost panicked, they ask each other what parts they've recovered, trying to see if anything's lost. They put everything back in place, and then sigh in relief. The same woman who approached me earlier clutches her own plastic fetus tighter and says: "Isn't God just *so powerful*?"

Now I'm enrolled at Wesleyan University, and I escort abortion patients some mornings because my mother *did* have an abortion, and that's where it got me.

I want to ask these people why they feel so strongly about a little plastic model. I want to ask them why they're there every morning. I want to ask them why, if they feel so strongly about preventing abortions that they're willing to offer financial aid to pregnant mothers, they don't do something that will really make a difference, like teaching contraception in public high schools? Why they don't hand out condoms to women who aren't pregnant yet instead of bloody photos to those who already are. I want to ask them all this, but I don't cross that line. I don't run up to the cars when they pull in. I don't talk to the women about the antis. I don't talk to the antis.

I just stand there in the cold, and try and use my body to keep a few feet of space between women coming into the clinic and the protesters who've made it their mission to unnerve them in any way possible.





CHRIST IN POLITICS?

BY BRODIE WELCH

The Christian Coalition is one of the most influential organizations in American politics in the 1990s. Founded in 1990 by Pat Robertson, the group has played a critical role in hundreds of elections at the local, state, and national levels. The group is dominated by evangelical Christians who blame the lack of a Christian ethic in American culture for the withering of the family and traditional family values. To briefly summarize a few of their views: the Christian Coalition is anti-abortion, anti-pornography, anti-feminist, anti-gay rights, anti-sex education, anti-welfare state, pro-prayer in public schools. By re-emphasizing these moral issues, the Coalition made religion a bigger factor than economics in the 1994 elections. In supporting such candidates as Pat Buchanan and Bob Dornan, the Coalition forced moderate Republicans like Bob Dole and Lamar Alexander further to the right.

The Christian Coalition is a grassroots political organization based in evangelical Christianity. It describes its agenda as pro-family and is currently the leading voice among various groups that constitute the Christian Right movement. Based in Virginia, the Coalition has over 1500 chapters and affiliates in all fifty states. It boasts a 12-million dollar annual budget and 1.7 million members. Pat Robertson's strong ideology provides both the inspiration and guidance for the organization. Ralph Reed, executive director of the Christian Coalition, supplies shrewd political strategies and deftly handles public relations. He writes in his welcome message on the Christian Coalition home page that the group works "on behalf of families who want to see less government intrusion in their lives and more family-friendly policy." According to critics, this innocuous description in no way fits the divisive, narrow-minded organization bent on imposing its values on the rest of the American public they see as the Christian Coalition. The Anti-Defamation League has denounced the Coalition's scapegoating and hate-breeding ideology as a "threat to American constitutional democracy."

The Christian Coalition's attempt to gain support among all different kinds of Christians has been met with hostility among Christians who do not agree with the Christian Coalition's politics. Because organizations like the Christian Coalition have been so vocal, left-wing Christians often feel as though Christianity has been appropriated by the radical right. The magazine *Sojourners* provides a mouthpiece for such

Christians—the publication is subtitled "An Alternative to the Christian Right." Jim Wallis, a frequent writer for *Sojourners*, complains that evangelical Christianity has been unfairly "hijacked" by such organizations as the Christian Coalition, as most evangel-

ical Christians are not members of the Christian Right. He cites the Coalition's support for tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans, its opposition to gun control, and its goal to abolish environmental regulations as decidedly un-Christian. Political science professor Clarke Cochran agrees that "a lot of issues that Christians should be supporting, such things as gun control, justice in health care, protecting the vulnerable widows and orphans (to use Biblical language), dignified work for the people, and property for the common good, never appear" in the Christian Coalition's agenda. Critics argue that such progressive concepts are not endorsed by the Christian Coalition because the Coalition exists solely to promote a conser-

vative agenda and uses Christianity as a means to manipulate people's views and gain supporters.

For supporters of the Christian Coalition, the most formidable problem facing our country is a decline in "family values." Families have decayed because religion has been increasingly eliminated from the sphere of American public life. For Christian conservatives, this assault on religion by "secular humanists" has resulted in an increase in violent crime, a rise in out-of-wedlock births, and even an increased use of marijuana. The solutions to eradicating such evils as these from society lies in strengthening the country's moral backbone and infusing politics with Christianity.

Following the "Republican Revolution" — the 1994 elections that ushered in the first Republican Congress in forty years, the Christian Coalition introduced its "Contract With the American Family" to law makers. The Contract suggests ten new legislative items that further the Coalition's pro-family agenda. Its first demand is for a constitutional amendment "to protect the religious liberties of Americans in public places." The amendment would do away with the "naked public square" by allowing such religious displays as nativity scenes and menorahs in town centers and government buildings, and would allow prayer in public schools. The second article of the Contract would shift power away from the Department of Education to local school boards to prevent "sex ed



Christian Coalition bigwig Pat Robertson relaxes with the good book

that includes contraception rather than abstinence [and] homosexuality as an acceptable alternative lifestyle" as well as textbooks that have an "anti-Western bias." Another item of the contract would eliminate the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities on the grounds that the former funds pornographic art and the latter supports queer theory, and the Legal Services Corporation, because it often pays the legal fees for poor people seeking divorce (and is therefore anti-family). Other provisions of the Contract With the American Family include "family-friendly" tax breaks, an abolition of the welfare state in favor of relying on private charities to care for society's dispossessed, school choice, and eliminating all government funding for abortion.

The latest issue of *Christian American*, a bi-monthly publication of the Christian Coalition, profiles a typical conservative Christian family. The article is very telling as to the what the Coalition considers "family values." The family's goal "is to grow the home-based business to the point where Jean [the wife and mother] can work and stay at home." The sub-text here is that although economic circumstances may require women to work, women should not be "forced" to abandon their traditional roles as wives and mothers to work outside the home — a view that the Coalition would support with legislation. Indeed, the Coalition's "Contract With the American Family" contains a provision (the Mother's and Homemaker's Rights Act) to make it easier for women to stay home rather than work, but still build a retirement fund through their husbands.

The Christian Coalition supports candidates in non-partisan elections such as school boards, as well as local, state, and national candidates for virtually every office. Their goal is to have a role to play in every district in the country. Though the Coalition will campaign on behalf of Democrats who preach conservative values, the organization is mainly tied to the Republican party. The Coalition will even aid a moderate Republican if s/he faces potential defeat at the hands of liberal Democrat.

The Christian Coalition discovered early on that Democrats cannot fight what they do not know exists. The Coalition owes its early successes to the art of stealth campaigning. Running a stealth campaign is tantamount to "flying below radar." Rather than courting the media and trying to gain as much publicity as possible, a stealth candidate eludes celebrity: s/he does not run television advertisements and does not participate in press conferences nor candidate forums. Instead, the stealth candidate focuses his/her campaign on church members, distributing voter guides, calling

on the clergy for endorsement from the pulpit, and conducting "in pew" voter registration. Campaigning outside the church is restricted to such tactics as telephone surveys to identify potential supporters, followed by direct-mailing of voter guides. The voter guides, a crucial element of most Christian Coalition campaigns, though technically nonpartisan (for tax purposes), are heavily biased so as to make it abundantly clear which candidate espouses "pro-family" values and which candidate does not.

The Coalition conducted a stealth campaign in the San Diego school board elections in 1992, winning a majority of the positions. In response to his organization's victory in San Diego, Reed bragged "I do guerrilla warfare. I paint my face and travel at night. You won't know it's over until election night." Two years later, the opposition in San Diego was wise to the Coalition's stealth tactics. They exposed the candidates' ties to the Christian Coalition, and regained control of the school board. This example buttresses the claim that "when voters believe a candidate is a member of the Christian Right, counter-mobilization efforts are frequently successful."



"I do guerrilla warfare. I paint my face and travel at night. You won't know it's over until election night."
-Ralph Reed

In response to critical attacks on stealth campaigning tactics, Reed claims that the Coalition no longer runs stealth campaigns. Yet even in above-ground campaigns, often the candidate will not reveal his/her ties to the Coalition until after s/he is elected. The reason for this is that people may easily dismiss Pat

Robertson as an extremist because they are familiar with his politics, but they may not know the politics of a particular Coalition-supported candidate. The Coalition's training manuals for grassroots organizing suggest

that candidates not emphasize religion during campaigns so as not to make people feel threatened.

Whether or not the Coalition still employs stealth tactics, its grassroots political organizing and mobilizing are still going strong. Three out of four self-identified evangelicals voted in 1994, an election where less than half of the general public bothered to go the polls. Reed claims that born-again evangelicals accounted for one-third of all ballots cast in the '94 elections. The Coalition's "in pew" voter registration and voter education through churches is largely responsible for the high turnout. The Coalition also conducts weekend training seminars for constituents to learn the art of political organizing. The motto of the Christian Coalition, "Think like Jesus. . . Fight like David. . . Lead like Moses. . . Run Like Lincoln" illustrates how the group merges politics and religion.

Nowhere is the religion-based call to action more evident than in the pages of *Christian American* magazine. One article poses the question "If we know the Lord's moral expectations of our government and



if we allow civil immorality to continue through our silence at the polls, isn't that a sin?" Religion is embedded in the conservative politics on the Christian Coalition's impressive home page (winner of the Best Christian Website award in 1994). The home page allows anyone with a web browser to review any number of speeches by Reed and Robertson, peruse editions of the Coalition's publications *Christian American* and *Religious Rights Watch*, sign up for training seminars in political organizing, or become a member. The Coalition also boasts an impressive grassroots organizing training manual, which has since been adopted by the Virginia Democratic Caucus in an attempt to beat the Christian Coalition at their own game.

In addition to stealth campaigning and grassroots organizing, the Coalition is trying to rally support by building alliances in the Catholic, African-American, and Jewish communities. The relationship between the Coalition and Catholics, however, is ambiguous. In Broward County, Florida, the Christian Coalition worked with Catholic conservatives to defeat an ordinance that would have outlawed discrimination against gays and lesbians. In 1995, the Coalition established a separate Catholic Alliance within its organization. This move has been criticized by Catholic Bishops as an attempt to divert Catholic loyalty away from the Pope and as a degrading measure which implies that Catholics are somehow inferior Christians. Sister Maureen Fiedler, a member of Catholics Speak Out, a Catholic political group, believes that the Alliance is doomed to fail because Catholics and Protestants have different traditions and have fallen into different camps on social issues. She states: "Pat Robertson and Ralph Reed think they can lure Catholics into their fold using a pro-life and pro-family label, but it won't work. Catholics are generally progressive on the social issues touted by the Right. They will be rightfully suspicious of the political motives driving the formation of this so-called Catholic Alliance." Catholics currently make up sixteen percent of the Coalition's members. Time will tell whether or not the alliance will endure.

For political journalist Clyde Wilcox, the new strategy of trying to broaden its base of support may make the Christian Coalition "a far more formidable organization than earlier incarnations of the Christian Right." Indeed, the Christian Right of the 1980s remained on the fringes of politics and all but disintegrated because of its failure to appeal to mainstream Republicans. The Christian Coalition, under the shrewd political guidance of Ralph Reed, has so far managed to avoid this pitfall. The clergy may be involved with local chapters, but they must not lead them directly. With Reed at the helm of the organization, the Christian Coalition's rhetoric seems friendly and inviting. Rhetoric such as "A vote for Bill Clinton is a vote for the Devil" (which surfaced in 1992) has been eradicated in favor of promoting "pro-family" legislation and "religious equality." Whether or not

the new, more tame lexicon reflects new positions on the actual issues is debatable.

The most striking example of the Coalition's attempt to moderate its position is its shift on abortion. Rather than demanding a national ban on abortion, Reed now calls for the national government to turn the abortion decision over to the states, which would allow some states to codify and others to ban abortion. The Coalition's partial retreat on abortion might make mobilizing an ardently religious constituency more difficult. Wilcox argues that it is easier to mobilize religious conservatives on moral and/or social issues than on economic ones, as moral issues strike at the core of Christian faith. Mark Shibley hypothesizes that by retreating from its hard-line positions on abortion and other issues, the Christian Coalition will alienate many of its most ardent supporters. For Shibley, evangelical churches foster obedience to a strong leader, absolutism in belief, conformity, and fanaticism. In such an environment, "the greater the demands, the more those demands will be met by the committed." Thus, the Christian Coalition's attempt to broaden its appeal by taking a less extreme tack on issues such as abortion may in fact estrange its most driven members.

While Ralph Reed's skillful political leadership may have succeeded in making the organization appear less fanatical to the public, evidence suggests that the rhetoric has remained as caustic as ever within the bounds of the Coalition itself. The keynote speech at the Coalition's 1995 "Road to Victory" conference was entitled "Why Jesus Shouldn't Have Fed the 5,000." Letters mailed directly to Coalition members and sympathizers cite organizations such as the National Organization for Women, Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition, and the American Civil Liberties Union as "the enemy." In a fundraising letter to Coalition members, Robertson claims that "The feminist agenda is not about equal rights for women. It is about a socialist, anti-family political movement that encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism, and become lesbians." So long as such illogical and inflammatory words can be found in the Christian Coalition's letters and pamphlets, its goal to become the "NAACP of the Christian Right" may be far off.

Nonetheless, the Christian Coalition has scored a number of impressive victories and has managed to influence policy-making in important ways. According to the liberal lobbying group People for the American Way, the Christian Coalition won forty percent of the 500 races it entered in 1992. Among these triumphs was the election of convicted felon Oliver North, who the Coalition carried to victory in 1994. The Coalition dominated Iowa in the 1992 elections. It won two US Congressional seats, as well as six of twelve contests for the state legislature. Without the Christian Coalition, Iowa's referendum to pass an Equal Rights Amendment would have succeeded; with the Coalition's assistance, the ERA was defeated fifty-two percent to forty-eight

percent.

In South Carolina, Republican Bob Inglis beat the popular incumbent liberal Democrat Liz Patterson for a seat in the US House of Representatives in 1992. Inglis's success exemplifies the surprising power of stealth campaign tactics. He describes his campaign as "rooted in secrecy, an occasional ruse, short on confrontation, long on shoe leather, and an alliance with increasingly politicized Christian conservatives. While the Christian Coalition did not directly endorse Inglis, the organization made its heavily slanted voter guides available to 840,000 people via church bulletins.

Twenty-one of the 107 delegates who drafted the Republican party platform at the 1992 Convention were members of the Christian Coalition. These Coalition members claim responsibility for the anti-gay rights, pro-life, anti-pornography, anti-condom distribution in schools, and support of school prayer planks of the Republican platform. They did not stop there. In 1994, the Christian Coalition spent over 1 million dollars during the first hundred days of the new Republican-controlled Congress.

The 1994 elections of Paul Coverdale in Georgia and Kay Bailey Hutchison in Texas illustrate the Coalition's new pragmatism. Though the Coalition challenged both Hutchinson and Coverdale's nominations because of their pro-choice stances, it funneled money into their campaigns against liberal Democrats. Here, the candidates clearly did not toe the Christian Coalition's line, but because they were more sympathetic to the Coalition's aims than their opposition, they received the Coalition's support.

The Christian Coalition merges conservative Christian ideology with political shrewdness and savvy. It attempts to harness support from Catholics and across different denominations of Protestants — in this sense it seems to be a true coalition. This strategy of trying to appeal to those outside their core base of supporters, especially black evangelicals and Catholics, has resulted in many electoral victories. Yet upon closer examination, the policies the Coalition endorses appear to contradict the values of many members of these same groups. Economic issues divide black evangelicals from white. A study comparing the views of black and white evangelicals indicates that black evangelicals tend to be sympathetic to government spending on welfare, health care, homeless people, and generally favor government action to promote socio-economic equality for blacks; most white evangelicals oppose government intervention in these areas. The Christian Coalition favors a virtual obliteration of the welfare state — a notion abhorrent to many black religious conservatives.

Catholics, too, tend to favor social spending, and thus oppose the Balanced Budget Amendment, which the Christian Coalition supports. Some of the measures the Coalition supports are fundamentally at odds with the teachings of the Catholic church. For example, the Christian Coalition endorses capital punishment, which the Catholic church condemned at the

Vatican II conference. Catholics and liberal Christians alike question how opposition to gun control and support for tax cuts for the wealthy are in any way Christian. To point out the hypocrisy in the Coalition's economic views, Clyde Wilcox quips: "Interestingly, the Bible does not contain any passage that says 'blessed are the rich, for only they shall receive health care.'" Even other conservative Christians such as George Weigel note that the Coalition's attempt to push political goals that have nothing to do with Christianity discredits the organization as authentically Christian-based. He contends that "to suggest that everything from voting rights for the delegate from Guam to *Roe v. Wade* is part of a Christian agenda demeans the whole agenda and takes away from the urgency of the really front-burner issues."

In response to charges that it breeds intolerance, sexism, homophobia, and classism, the Coalition claims that it is a defensive, not offensive, movement trying to protect Christians in a society that is prejudiced against them. Reed claims he does not intend for anyone in his organization to force their beliefs on others, he only wants "a seat at the table" where policy decisions are made. What, after all, is wrong with citizens putting their values into action by exercising their right to vote? Plus, many of the Coalition's proposals involve turning power back to the state and local level, which would let states and communities decide for themselves how to deal with abortion and sex education — a seemingly benign proposal. Yet one must question Reed's sincerity in merely wanting a seat at the table and not really wanting to overturn it entirely. In light of the Oregon bill the Coalition backed which would mandate that all schools teach that homosexuality is "abnormal, wrong, unnatural, and perverse," the Coalition seems dedicated to letting local school boards make their own decisions only when it suits the Coalition's own interests.

The Oregon bill is just one example of the Christian Coalition's actions contradicting its rhetoric. While the Coalition reaches out to black evangelicals and Catholics, it supports policies that clearly go against the interests of these groups. At the same time as the Coalition is trying to appeal to moderate Republicans, its in-house mailings attempt to scare supporters into action by demonizing women, gays and lesbians, and those who value the welfare state above the Weberian Protestant ethic. The Coalition boasts both a charismatic leader, Pat Robertson, and an expert political strategist and speaker, Ralph Reed. The two serve as symbols for the Coalition's synthesis of ideological purism and political pragmatism. With upwards of a million followers, it seems as though the Christian Coalition has pulled off this merger successfully. Unless the gap between the Coalition's rhetoric and its actions grows wide enough for its followers to begin falling off, the Coalition will continue to serve as the voice for conservative Christians in contemporary American politics.





WE'RE HERE, WE'RE QUEER

...AND WE WANT TO STUDY

by Aongus Burke

So you're gay. Or bi(curious). Or maybe you don't have any tendencies in that direction at all (yeah, we've heard that one before). Who knows why you're interested in the field of gay, lesbian, and sexuality studies? But you are, and you figure "hey, I'm at Wesleyan — I should learn something about this stuff while I'm here." And why

What makes queer studies a legitimate field? Well, first of all, try the fact that gay people exist.

not? On the whole, people here will be pretty supportive of that kind of interest. It sure beats bringing, say, *Fear of a Queer Planet* to the counter at your local bookstore back home.

So you go to the coursebook and try to see what's available. Invariably, you discover that there's not much there. There probably aren't any courses devoted exclusively to gay, lesbian, and sexuality studies. Maybe there are a couple that devote a decent amount of time to the field, but it's definitely not central. And then a good few courses mention the word "Sexuality" in the course description, almost always preceded by "Race, Class, Gender, and..."

So you're in a conundrum. You decide you don't want to take one of those courses that contain a token amount of gay, lesbian, and sexuality stuff—the rest of the course just isn't interesting enough to you. You grudgingly consider taking one of the semi-queer-oriented courses. Then you realize that you have to put it as a second or, more probably, first primary if you want to get it. But you're a such-and-such major and you've all these courses you have to take and to take them you have to get to them...Or there's some other courses that are entirely devoted to stuff that you're really interested in. You've got to prioritize, and that means queer studies has to go.

This is an all-too-familiar scenario for many students, myself included. This year I've been working on the Gay, Lesbian, and Sexuality Studies (GLASS) Committee to do something about it. One thing we've been doing is collecting information before pre-registration about exactly which courses being offered the next semester have a decent, if not substantial, amount

of queer-related material in them and letting students know about them; hopefully, most of you got our list in your mailboxes a few weeks ago.

Our other main project has been pressuring the university to institute a queer faculty line. A queer faculty line is a professor specifically recruited by the university to teach queer studies. Incidentally, Professor Henry Abelow, who teaches in the English department and American Studies program, does not fulfill this function. Abelow, like every other faculty member at Wesleyan, was recruited to teach courses in a non-queer studies field. Faculty members get to teach a certain number of electives each year (rarely more than two), although if they take on additional departmental and/or administrative duties, or go on leave, this number is reduced.

Abelow, for example, almost always devotes his electives to queer studies courses, but he was forced to cancel his Queer Theory course this semester when he became chair of the American Studies program. Since Abelow took a sabbatical during the 1995-6 academic year, his course on gay and lesbian literature, *The Newest Minority*, was the only course offered at Wesleyan during the past two years that dealt primarily with gay, lesbian, and sexuality studies. One wonders how anyone ever fulfills the (mysteriously unadvertised) concentration in Queer Studies offered for American Studies majors.

Do students want more queer studies courses to be offered? You be the judge. I coordinated a petition drive for a queer faculty line earlier this semester.

When I read now, I am much more attuned to what the author's underlying premises are, what s/he normalizes, what analytical categories are being used, what s/he treats as ahistorical or natural, and so on.

I'm sure a few of you remember because many of you signed it — 692 people, in fact, all in about 5 hours of petitioning. Certainly the numbers for the queer-relevant courses offered at the University are suggestive. *The Newest Minority* enrolled 97 students in the Fall 1996 semester, an unheard of number of students for an English course. The number is especially impressive since Abelow only let in sophomores, juniors, and

seniors who listed the course as a first or second primary during preregistration. This semester, there were about 10 courses offered at Wesleyan that gave more than a passing reference to queer issues. Of these, however, only a few really dealt with gay, lesbian, and sexuality studies to any significant degree. The preregistration figures for these courses also show how much demand there is for them. Race and Sexuality in American History, taught by Renee Romano, originally

Wedeen is leaving the university after this semester amidst rumors of friction between her and others in the notoriously conservative Wesleyan Department of Government. One wonders if her decision to teach Sex, Gender, and Sexuality as an elective fits into that.

had a class limit of 20. Given the excessive demand for the course, Romano expanded the cap to 22. That meant she still had to turn away 17 other students who tried to pre-register for the course (almost all as first or second primaries), as well as 10 other students who expressed interest. The class limit for Lisa Wedeen's Sex, Gender, and Sexuality course was 35. There were 15 failed enrollments for this course (again, almost all first and second primaries) and about 5 other students expressed interest. (Note to professors: if you want students to preregister for your class, put the word "sexuality" in the title.) The numbers for Sex, Gender, and Sexuality are particularly impressive since a similar course, Feminist Theory, was offered this semester. Feminist Theory, normally an extremely difficult course to get into for non-majors, only enrolled 20 spaces this semester. The major difference between Feminist Theory and Sex, Gender and Sexuality: the level of queer studies content. Claire Potter's Women and the American Experience and Gary Comstock's Introductory Sociology section, queer relevant courses taught by openly queer professors, also had astronomical numbers of failed enrollments and turn-aways.

Gary Comstock, the university's Protestant chaplain, is perpetually listed as a visiting professor. Wedeen and Romano are untenured; Potter just got tenured this semester. This points to another problem students interested in queer studies courses face: since such a large number of those courses are offered by either visiting or otherwise untenured professors, no one looks out for them. The tenure issue is an especially prickly one for professors who teach queer studies material because politics have a way of figuring into university employment practices. Wedeen, for example, is leaving the university after

this semester amidst rumors of friction between her and others in the notoriously conservative Wesleyan Department of Government. One wonders if her decision to teach Sex, Gender, and Sexuality as an elective fits into that. There are good reason to believe as much. Abelow was originally denied tenure in the early 1970s until pressure from gay students got the decision overturned. In recent years, queer visiting professor of sociology Becky Thompson, who taught popular courses with significant amounts of queer material, was not offered tenure-track positions at the university. Thompson alleged to *The Argus* that word leaked that several members of the Wesleyan Department of Sociology were displeased with her "activist" politics, which were supposedly in conflict with her intellectual responsibilities.

Which brings us to the question of academic legitimacy. When members of the GLASS Committee spoke with President Bennet and Vice President of Academic Affairs Richard Boyd about the possibility of instituting a queer faculty line at Wesleyan, they weren't much impressed with our arguments concerning the student demand for queer studies courses. They wanted arguments about the legitimacy of queer studies as a field of inquiry. This is a familiar reply, of course — it has been issued to the proponents of women's studies and African American studies programs in the past, often by those whose political leanings make them prone to disfavoring such programs. But no serious scholar today can neglect incorporating things like race, class, and gender into their analyses of literature or social phenomena. I'm sure we'll be saying the same thing one day about sexuality.

What makes queer studies a legitimate field? Well, first of all, try the fact that gay people exist. We have always existed, everywhere. I'm reminded of the

No serious scholar today can neglect incorporating things like race, class, and gender into their analyses of literature or social phenomena. I'm sure we'll be saying the same thing one day about sexuality.

argument that women's studies advocates still have to make, that women represent half of the world's population. How can you justify not studying them? How can you justify not studying us? Like women, people engaging in homosexual behavior have always existed, and those people have almost always been oppressed. Why have societies gone to such great lengths to oppress a group of people marked only by activities they consensually engage in with one another? How have societies done this? How have queer people



responded? It is beyond me how anyone could argue that these are not legitimate questions for academics to attempt to answer.

Answering them requires a serious intellectual effort. It requires people to question some of their deepest assumptions — about gender, sex, anatomy, evolution, the family, power, science, God...the list, I'm always discovering, goes on and on. It requires people to think across disciplines. Oppression of gay people has roots in and/or is expressed in politics, economics, philosophy, religion, language, socialization, and medicine.

Questioning assumptions, thinking across disciplines: isn't this is what a liberal arts education is supposed to be all about? I certainly know the impact that the works of queer theorists like Michel Foucault, Monique Wittig, and Judith Butler have had on my thinking. In addition to the substantive knowledge I have gained from their writings, they have also effected a thorough revolution in my analytical and critical skills. When I read now, I am much more attuned to what the author's underlying premises are, what s/he normalizes, what analytical categories are being used, what s/he treats as ahistorical or natural, and so on. These are contentious matters, ones that I encounter in almost all of my classes — even the ones that have no obvious relation to queer studies (like the classes in my decidedly straight CSS major).

Many of these analytical skills could, I suppose, have been acquired in non-queer studies classes. Maybe the only reason I learned them in courses with queer studies content is because I'm queer and am

no other field can. Being queer forces you to examine fundamental assumptions because your very existence defies them. It gives you an intimate knowledge of what oppression is. In fact, I would argue that gays generally have a capacity to understand oppression in a way that no other group can. Unlike most ethnic minorities and (straight) women, most gays get to

Maybe the only reason I learned analytical skills in courses with queer studies content is because I'm queer and am close to the material. Of course, there are a lot of queer students here at Wesleyan. If we want them to pick up those all important critical thinking skills, giving them queer studies courses is a pretty sensible and efficient strategy for the administration to pursue.

experience life as both oppressor and oppressed for the same category of oppression. We know what it's like to identify as both straight and gay. We know the radical shift in one's consciousness that is effected when one undergoes the identity transformation that is at the very essence of coming out. Personally, I don't share the viewpoint that all oppression is the same or even interconnected. But I do believe that are broad similarities involved, if only because since coming out I better understand why other oppressed groups are also so angry, also harbor separatist tendencies, also demand self-determination.

But, in the end, whether or not a queer faculty line get instituted at Wesleyan isn't about academics. The GLASS Committee knows this; for the most part, we're letting our allies in the faculty handle the legitimacy questions. The real issues are political and economic—the biases of administrators, their fears about alienating alumni, parents of prospective students, and anybody else who helps keep Wesleyan financially afloat. Our goal is to counter those forces. Our meetings with President Bennet and Vice President Boyd and the petition drive have been part of an effort to show that students interested in queer studies are a political force on this campus too. And our more recent efforts to gain the support of queer alumni and parents of queer students mark our first attempts at addressing economic issues. Again, the forces of irrational homophobia, not of rational argumentation, stand in the way of the institutionalization of a queer faculty line at Wesleyan. And what better way to conquer irrationality than through education?

Unlike most ethnic minorities and (straight) women, most gays get to experience life as both oppressor and oppressed for the same category of oppression. We know what it's like to identify as both straight and gay. We know the radical shift in one's consciousness that is effected when one undergoes the identity transformation that is at the very essence of coming out.

close to the material. Of course, there are a lot of queer students here at Wesleyan. If we want them to pick up those all important critical thinking skills, giving them queer studies courses is a pretty sensible and efficient strategy for the administration to pursue. But queer studies does more than cater to a specific audience. It has the potential to produce knowledge that



REVOLUTIONARY ANARCHIST YOUTH

HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE

BY DANIEL DYLAN YOUNG



The word on everyone's lips has been: "anarchy"...well okay, maybe I only wish that it was the word on everyone's lips. But it has been the word on my mind almost constantly for the last month or so. It first reared its head during a phone conversation with my best friend from home. I can't remember much of what he said, except that he was beginning to give serious attention to the political ideas of some self-proclaimed "communist anarchists" and anarchists in general. And for some reason the word and the idea grabbed my attention in a way that communism and socialism never quite did. There's something very sexy about anarchy, though often it's seen as sexy in the same way as drugs or violence or dramatic death. But when you really get to know anarchy — well it's still sexy, but in a basically non-harmful yet still creative, vibrant earth shattering, mind opening way.

After that word was mumbled to me over the phone and had begun to infiltrate my mind again, it popped up again when I volunteered to help Food Not Bombs during Spring Break. On a chilly Sunday morning I went to an apartment in Hi-rise to help prepare food for distribution in front of the Buttonwood Tree downtown. While I was chopping up potatoes for a massive pot of soup, a knock came at the door and I was introduced to the younger brother of the Food Not Bombs member whose apartment we were working in, who had driven down from the Pioneer Valley in Massachusetts to bring his sister home for the break and come to help out too. A female friend of his who was involved with Food Not Bombs back in the Valley had come along for the ride and also to help out.

As we cooked, I noticed that these newcomers had patches on their clothing with stylized anarchy symbols and the words "Revolutionary Anarchist Youth" written around it. I was intrigued, and asked them about it, though I didn't think that it was a serious activist organization. I found out that serious and active are exactly what "Revolutionary Anarchist Youth" (RAY) is.

The organization was brought into existence through the efforts of a young man named James Creedon, who I can testify from spending only a few hours in his presence is an extremely intelligent, articulate, generous and amiable person (of course, one could surmise that just from looking at the organization which he helped create). An article printed in the *Pioneer Valley Advocate* (which I assume gets the facts mostly straight because Creedon wrote an angry

response to it in which he pointed out no factual errors but only complained of the unctuous ageist and neo-liberal bias of the writer) paints this picture of Creedon and the founding of RAY: "Creedon, 19, grew up in a middle-class Connecticut family, a self-described 'angry young kid' who dropped out of high school at the urging of a physics teacher who recognized that Creedon was frustrated and unchallenged by traditional schooling. Creedon also was frustrated by the world in



Members of RAY getting along together in non-regulated communal harmony

general. He experimented with, and then rejected, various alternative scenes...Creedon stumbled upon anarchism while studying at Goddard College, a small, experimental school in Vermont, and at the Institute for Social Ecology, a Goddard summer program. Last summer Creedon traveled to Chicago to attend the Active Resistance Conference, a national gathering of anarchists. It was there that the anarchist ideas he'd been playing with for months began to crystallize for him...Creedon returned from Chicago and called for a youth meeting. 'Hey!' read the fliers he posted around town. 'Are you disgusted with the way our society is based on exploitation and greed? Are you angry about being manipulated and oppressed in school, work, at home, on the street, everywhere you go? ... Well, what are you going to do about it? ... Now is the time to get together and talk about what really needs to happen. Time to rise up, raise a fist, link arms and lock down.'"

Thus began a group which has garnered a hard-core membership of 20-30 Northampton youths, at least as many irregular members, and the interest of many folks inside and outside the Pioneer Valley area.



But far, far more importantly, the group has managed to effectively further the ideals that they propose in their manifesto, which envision: "the construction of a society based on egalitarian self-governing communities, confederated together for the benefit of all." Among other things they run an increasingly large lending library of radical texts, a books-to-prisoners program, weekly showings of political and labor films, and a very professional web page. They frequently protest different forms of youth oppression, the last one being a protest held on March 22 in which they carried banners, performed street theater and handed out literature to educate people on the different forms of horrendous youth oppression taking place in the United States and elsewhere. Last Columbus Day they led a protest against the racist writing of history that made a genocidal egomaniac from Genoa a hero. Activities included "colonizing" the local Starbucks. They have accomplished/created all this by making decisions together through consensus in a meeting format where no one has coercive authority and everyone's ideas and opinions are weighed equally.

Of course I didn't learn all this from that first conversation with those two revolutionary anarchist youths in Hi-rise, but I heard enough about the activities they were engaged in, and the strong base of many members' political views that I was now not only extremely intrigued, but beginning to be impressed. The two youths I met kept deriding themselves for having forgotten to bring pamphlets along, but they told me to check out their web page. This I did a day or so later. My impression of the intelligence and professional nature of the group grew tenfold when I saw the page.

Being relatively alone on the quiet Wesleyan campus during spring break, I went to the Wesleyan library to look for 10 or so books that were listed on the RAY web page as essential anarchist readings. I found several of them (in the extensive collection of anarchist-associated literature in Olin — hooray for the last row of the HX shelves on floor 2A!) and began reading. First I devoured an essay entitled "Anarchism: What It Really Stands For" by Emma Goldman. Reading Goldman's essay I was struck by the intense beauty of the ideas that she was communicating. Goldman's simplest definition of anarchism in the text is: "The philosophy of a new social order based on liberty unrestricted by manmade law; the theory that all forms of government rest on violence, and are therefore wrong and harmful, as well as unnecessary." She goes on to explain the way in which, "Anarchism has declared war on the pernicious influences which have so far prevented the harmonious blending of individual and social instincts, of the individual and society."

"The philosophy of a new social order based on liberty unrestricted by manmade law; the theory that all forms of government rest on violence, and are therefore wrong and harmful, as well as unnecessary."

-Emma Goldman

These pernicious influences are: "Religion, the dominion of the human mind; Property, the dominion of human needs; and Government, the dominion of human conduct." Goldman proposes that by abandoning the pointless subjugation to perceived supernatural powers which religion creates; deprivation which perceived rules of property propagate; and restrictions which perceived hierarchies of authority create, humanity can live, love, and create, free in body and mind. Now what could be more beautiful than that?

Of course there are problems: in order for an anarchist society to be as successful as modern governmental societies have been at keeping the peace (which, if you take the U.S. as the example of the governmental society, of course, really isn't that successful/peaceful) the citizens must be extremely responsible individuals who consider the effect on everyone of every action they commit, and who are dedicated to looking out for the welfare of others. And the people in most modern societies (at least the U.S.) don't on the whole seem to have this sense of self responsibility or

concern for others. But as I finished Goldman's essay and began getting into a short, simple, but extraordinarily provocative text by Colin Ward entitled *Anarchy In Action*, I

began to see how mass

insensitivity is in many ways created by hierarchical, authority-based governments themselves. When you rely on the police and courts to solve your squabbles, or the unemployment agency to put food on your table, or the multinationals to tell you what's real on the television screen, of course you don't learn how to deal with people to solve problems or even how to really think for yourself. But when the government is nowhere to be found and things need to get done, somehow they seem to get accomplished. This has taken place throughout history following natural disasters or even violent revolutions which rent the social and physical fabric of a society. When such disasters take place, small communities (though the effect may be different in the extraordinarily alienated, isolated, post-modern era cities) tend to band together, providing bedding or food for those who have been displaced, and doing so in an amiable, ungrudging manner so that everyone is provided for. But though people provide for each other peaceably when some kind of disaster has displaced other agencies and left the responsibility in our hands, when the disaster is over and the structures of power seem to be back in place, the same people who helped during the disaster will walk by homeless people on the street with only the wish that "someone would do something about these poor people." As Colin Ward notes, these times following revolutions or disasters, when people take care of each

other and the peace is maintained without any kind of police, are rarely or never examined by students of government...what are they afraid of here?

During the days following my first interactions with members of RAY my knowledge and appreciation of anarchy grew infinitely. By the next weekend I was so interested that I got on a bus to Northampton on Saturday to attend a meeting of some big-sounding organization called "The Atlantic Anarchists Circle" which was being hosted by RAY that afternoon.

The meeting, as I have told many people since, was one of the most thought-provoking experiences of my life. What happened might not have looked so spectacular : 50 to 80 people came together in the course of an afternoon (the size kept fluctuating as groups left and new ones came in) creating a ragged menagerie ranging in age from 70 to 16, who

had travelled from everywhere between Vermont and Philadelphia to attend the conference. The conference began with a delicious potluck meal, and following this was a meeting which lasted 4 to 5 hours. We first spoke about various goals, tasks or problems for the anarchist movement in general, and then about the different activities and projects which the groups in attendance were involved with in their home communities. These discussions were not so productive as they might have been, probably because (as a 16-year old RAY member who had attended prior Circle meetings informed me) the 20-30 RAY members and many other people present had never been to a Circle meeting before. Our behemoth group often got side-tracked in long conversations where important ideas were repeated over and over (which did, however, emphasize their importance). However, we did manage in the course of the discussions to set up a plan for the daunting task of creating a directory which would list all members of the circle across the Atlantic coast who had skills that they could speak about or teach to groups, both activist skills and general skills of self-sufficiency — as, for some, escaping from the yoke of the modern authoritarian system means learning to provide everything possible for yourself. The meeting ended with that same 16-year old leading a discussion on youth oppression and prejudices against youth.

So what did yours truly get from the meeting? First off, I became very excited about the ability of individuals, no matter how many doors were closed to them by age or race or economic class or lack of education, to organize themselves into happy, functioning, self-sufficient communities and rule themselves while helping others to gain similar self-sufficiency. Secondly, I became very excited about all the doors of thought and behavior which anarchism opens. The

completely egalitarian nature of the anarchism that these people preach and try to practice is like democracy on massive amounts of speed (but without the paranoia). It's the idea of listening to everyone, of any age, of any race or nationality — of not dismissing *anyone's* ideas for *any* reason. Instead you try to thoughtfully understand other's dreams and ideals, attempt to integrate your own with them, and where this is not possible, try to negotiate for a change in both mind-sets which will allow all to co-exist harmoniously. Generalized constructs become meaningless inside of anarchism; everyone's individual whims are

suddenly far more important than one ruler's whims or some amalgamated average of everyone's tastes. Education, art, architecture and all else are allowed to take on an independent, unlegislated nature which will allow them

When you rely on the police and courts to solve your squabbles, or the unemployment agency to put food on your table, or the multi-nationals to tell you what's real on the television screen, of course you don't learn how to deal with people to solve problems or even how to really think for yourself

to be fitted to the individual in order to further their own development and their development inside of a community. Individuals aren't fitted into homogenous structures — heterogeneous structures are fitted for separate groups of individuals. In this way anarchists try to eventually create a society with the minimum of oppression, repression and suppression.

It's a very beautiful dream. It may never be accomplished, or it may take a thousand more years of effort. But there are lots of important things to do now, such as figuring out what immediate actions will work best for achieving the beautiful dream of total, peaceful anarchy and self sufficiency working towards them. This will take a lot of study, and requires that everyone think and be sure to reach a clear ideal before they start, rather than simply following one man's dream and plan. But when our *nth*-generation descendants can stand proud and free, they will love that we started them on that path.

Anarchy now! Anarchy later! Anarchy forever!

(With just a little luck, James Creedon should be coming to Wesleyan to speak about RAY and anarchism in the coming weeks. RAY can be contacted at P.O. Box 249, Hadley, MA, 01035, or through their web page at <www.geocities.com/



Housing is Not a Privilege



Cutting Locks, Going to Jail, and Getting Something Done



Homes Not Jails is an organization that works both publicly and secretly to obtain housing for the homeless, partly by taking over abandoned, disused, and vacated buildings. People who can't afford housing sleep on the steps of vacant buildings that could be places for them to stay, but these buildings remain empty for the sake of profit. Homes Not Jails works to oppose this, because housing is a human

ties to justify the evictions, the San Francisco Rent Board questioned Imhoff's "candor and credibility" and said that the evictions were a "landlord strategy." Imhoff wanted the rent-control removed, and didn't plan repairs. The Rent Board recommended that Imhoff be held accountable to the District Attorney.

Soon afterwards, Homes Not Jails had its first public takeover, at 250 Taylor Street. On Christmas Day in 1992 they again occupied the building, asking that Imhoff be prosecuted as the Rent Board had recommended. Each time that Homes Not Jails occupied 250 Taylor, trespassing charges had been dropped, but after a takeover on Thanksgiving Day in 1993, District Attorney Arlo Smith prosecuted the squatters. Since then, over \$100,000 has been spent to prosecute four of the people who tried to take over 250 Taylor. Because Smith claims he doesn't have the resources, there has been no investigation or prosecution of Richard Imhoff.

Homes Not Jails houses people who are homeless through direct action, such as:

- Legislative Action — researching existing laws, such as the McKinney Act,

- federal legislation which provides for excess government property to

- be used for homeless housing;

- SB-120 in California, which provides for

- the use of vacant properties for homeless services; and an amendment to the New York state constitution which guarantees the right to shelter for all citizens; and advocating new legislation

- Sweat Equity Projects — working with non-profit housing developers to repair dilapidated buildings with the help of homeless people

- Covert Squatting — making vacant buildings habitable and available for occupation, and providing resources for these squats

- Civil Disobedience — nonviolent public protests and marches, and visible public takeovers in which members of Homes Not Jails are



right.

In late 1987, landlord Richard Imhoff claimed that he was planning improvements on a forty-unit apartment building at the corner of Taylor and Ellis Streets in San Francisco's Tenderloin. Maintenance of 250 Taylor had declined and tenants had complained about the disrepair, and as tenants left, their apartments stayed empty. By early 1988 Imhoff had evicted all the remaining tenants, and, because the building was rent-controlled many of the evicted tenants were unable to pay higher rents and became homeless, while 250 Taylor remained vacant.

In 1992, almost five years later, it was still vacant when, after giving Imhoff numerous opportuni-

prepared to be arrested.

In early 1997, Homes Not Jails took over the Alexandria Hotel in Boston's South End, a five-story, 22,500 square foot structure that is more than a century old, once a boardinghouse for wealthy bachelors. It has been vacant for more than twenty years. After a fire in 1993 the city declared it unsound, diverted traffic around its Massachusetts Avenue block, and ordered the owner, Russell Britt, to renovate it. He did not, local businesses complained about the street closing, and Britt was jailed briefly for his noncompliance. It is now owned by Macedonia Realty Trust, who promised to repair it three years ago.

Members of Homes Not Jails cut the locks on the Alexandria Hotel in the morning of January 25 and replaced them with their own. Demonstrators rallied at Copley Square and marched to the South End. They arrived at the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Washington Street around one in the afternoon, and members of Homes Not Jails entered the building. The occupiers unboarded a third-story window and hung a banner out that said "Housing Is A Human Right." Police arrived soon afterwards. The occupiers smuggled food and water by lowering a wire from the window until a police commander tied the wire to one of the building's columns. Around quarter of six that day, Boston police entered the building, removed the seven remaining occupiers, and charged them with breaking and entering and trespassing, charges that would later be dropped.

There are 22,345 residential units empty in Boston, and according to the Boston Emergency Shelter Commission there are 6,000 homeless people. There is more than enough housing for the homeless. But rents in Boston increased by 12% in 1996 and similar numbers are expected for 1997 because of scaled back rent regulation, forcing some people to become homeless.

The federal government will spend \$26.8 billion this year on incarceration, and the state of Massachusetts will spend \$1.2 billion, more than three times the combined expenditures for housing assistance, daycare, and elderly services. Massachusetts spending on law enforcement has almost doubled since 1988, while funding for emergency shelters has been cut by 44% in the last two years.

From the Boston Homes Not Jails website:

Homes Not Jails was founded under the basic principle that human needs should come before profit and greed. As an organization, we believe that we do not need to tolerate the mean-spirited policies that keep poor people hungry, homeless, and desperate. Inspired by our belief in the resources of the individual, the strength of the community,

and the power of mutual aid, we offer an alternative to the current housing problem here in Boston — we will take what we need.

Homes Not Jails isn't about stealing, but taking what is being thrown away, because there is enough for all. Homes Not Jails is founded on principles of nonviolence and civil disobedience. In the United States, the governmental and popular solution



is to jail people, treat symptoms of a socio-economically divided and imbalanced elite-accommodating society, a materialistic, consumptive, and violent society, instead of examining the causes. Across the nation and internationally, working without any capitol source, undermining the profiteering excesses of wasteful materialist culture based on capital, Homes Not Jails is taking what is being thrown away and giving it to people.

<http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/7996/index.html>

<http://iww.org/~gnat/9508/h/hnj-f1.html>

<http://iww.org/~gnat/9508/h/hnj9509p8.html>



Buy More Omelet-Makers

WHY SMART PEOPLE BUY STUPID THINGS

by The Fearless Cook

So the other day one of my housemates walked into the kitchen. This is the housemate who's rarely home for dinner and almost never shops or cooks; the one who has something like four million points left.

"I just bulk-ordered \$300 worth of food," she said. "I think I may have ordered fifteen pounds of cereal."

It has occurred to me many times—pretty much whenever I go grocery shopping with a friend who's on a tight budget—that the Wesleyan meal plan is turning me into a completely moronic consumer. I don't look at food prices. I don't buy only things that I know I will eat before they go bad. Why should I? We have a meal plan, after all, that renders the purchase of fifteen pounds of cereal just about entirely irrelevant, something you can do almost without noticing.

The truly great thing here is that buying fifteen pounds of cereal, even by accident, is far from the stupidest thing that can be done with points. (Unless, of course, you loathe cereal, which my friend does not.) I mean, even those microwave omelet dishes begin to look pretty good when you're presented with a choice of losing your unspent points or buying huge amounts of slightly peculiar things. Who knows? Maybe eggs taste really good when you microwave them. And even though you've eaten breakfast on enough airplanes to know that they don't taste like anything at all and have the texture of that starch-based styrofoam, you buy it, just to see. (NOTE: I have not done this. I've just been tempted.)


This is fascinating. Because what consumer capitalism does is to get us to buy ever-increasing piles of stuff by creating in us the "need" for all of it, so that, for instance, next time I go to the mall I may well dis-

cover that I *really need* another pair of shoes, even though I already have a couple dozen pairs. And whereas I can put "need" in quotation marks when it's the "need" for another pair of boots that consumer

capitalist society has convinced me I have, those quotation marks have to disappear when I talk about the need that ARAMARK has instilled in me for a microwave omelet dish. Or something. Because if I don't spend my points, they revert to a large capitalist institution. That's bad.

So you buy something stupid. I admit to having done this, and I'm sure you've done it, too. What else can you do? I gave well over \$100 worth of food

to various food drives last year and I don't see why this year should be any different. I'll be eating Weshop pasta all summer. I still have no incentive to be a remotely intelligent consumer. So I have this idea that maybe ARAMARK should get other large corporations to pay it for training us into the habit of buying any shit that crosses our paths. Even though this wouldn't benefit us directly, at least we wouldn't have to keep hearing how, actually, ARAMARK barely makes any money off of us at all.

At this point, standard writing practice demands a conclusion. But it's completely futile. I had a minor observation. I wrote it down. What am I going to do now; call for revolution? Revolution itself is not a bad idea, but I believe that the suggestion has been made several times, directed against both our meal plans and capitalism more generally. They're still here. I can suggest that you not buy things you won't use and give lots to food drives. Well, duh. If you needed me to suggest that, allow me to make another suggestion: kill yourself now. There's no need to go on. 



HERMES INDEX

(With apologies to Harper's Magazine)



SOCIETY


- 1) Percent of burglaries taking place between Memorial Day and Labor Day as cited in an ad for ADT Security warning that "burglars look forward to your summer vacation as much as you do": 26
- 2) Percent of the year that takes place between Memorial Day and Labor Day: 26.6
- 3) Average age of a woman receiving AFDC: 29
- 4) Average number of children of AFDC recipients: 2
- 5) Average years of work experience of a woman going on welfare: 4
- 6) Percent of AIDS infections that occur in the developing world: 85
- 7) Percent of annual spending on AIDS prevention that goes to the developing world: 10
- 8) US trade surplus with Mexico in dollars in 1993 (before NAFTA took effect on January 1, 1994): 1.7 billion
- 9) US trade deficit with Mexico in dollars in 1996: 16 billion
- 10) Number of US workers certified by the US Department of Labor in one NAFTA retraining program as having been laid off due to NAFTA: 98,645
- 11) Approximate weekly earnings in dollars of television production workers in JVC's Elmwood Park, NJ plant: 360
- 12) Approximate weekly earnings in dollars of television production workers in JVC's Tijuana plant: 50
- 13) Mexico's 1996 global ranking in number of billionaires per country: 5
- 14) Estimated percentage of Mexico's people who live on less than \$5 per day: 44

Sources: 1-2: Consumer Reports; 3-5: NOW; 6-7: The Nation; 8-11: Peacework, 4/97


HERMES April, 1997

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